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[Article by Scott Hill: 'Healing by Self-Regulation']

[Text] Soviet scientists have long since stopped laughing at the capacities of Far-Eastern yogis. Studies of the influence on metabolism and cardiac and respiratory activity are being carried out in the most modern laboratories. ESOTERA contributor Scott Hill reports on this research in the framework of his observations during the Parapsychology Conference in Alma-Ata, in which he took part in October of last year by special permission as a western psi expert.

Autogenous training has been known in Germany since 1920 through Johannes Schultz, who developed this technique that is still practiced today. But in its origin it goes back centuries and essentially agrees with yoga, to the extent that psychic forces can be brought by suitable training to control the functions of the physical body, even including functions that are regarded from the medical standpoint as not subject to conscious control.

The Sanskrit words *yoga* and *yuga* mean union and yoke, and yoga actually means two different things: a stage of union with absolute reality and the system of exercises that must be done to achieve that state. Just as a yoke keeps two oxen in step, the yogi seeks to bring his psychic powers into harmony with a greater reality. Thanks to space-age technology, this can be achieved up to a certain point without very long training. The encounter of yogis and scientists has generated the new science of *biofeedback*. The Soviet scientist prefers the term "*psychic self-regulation*."

Stories have been told of holy men in the orient who could control their own heart function -- could control their cerebral activity and the circulation of their blood or have themselves buried alive without breathing. Were these merely phantastic travel stories... or something more?

Scientists in the Soviet Union have long since stopped laughing about such stories, because they are true and are no longer limited to the mysterious

East. There is more and more scientific literature on the domination of the mind over the body, and Soviet researchers have not ignored this branch of science. Studies of control of metabolism, which could be proved in the laboratory, reach back to 1881, when Prof Botkin reported in a clinical journal (ESHCHENEDEL'NAYA KLINICHESKAYA GAZETA) on a patient who was suffering from advanced muscular atrophy and possessed the rare ability to slow down his heartbeat voluntarily at any time and thus disturb his regular biorhythm. He needed only to think of his sad condition of health in order to demonstrate this capacity. Cheerful thoughts, on the other hand, did not produce the opposite effect.

In 1885 J.R. Tarkhanov published an article in PFLUEGERS ARCHIV intitled "Ueber die willkürliche Acceleration (Beschleunigung) der Herzschläge beim Menschen" (Voluntary Acceleration of the Pulse in Man). The subject was a student at the medico-surgical academy, E. Salome, who was described as "tall, rather thin, and somehow nervous and sensitive." In scientific laboratory experiments it was possible to show in him, even with the measuring instruments available at that time, definite proof that pulse, blood pressure, and cutaneous temperature could all be voluntarily influenced. It was many years, however, before Tarkhanov's and Botkin's works were recognized by other scientists, but this was long before yoga was accepted as a scientific research field.

Today experiments with the cardiac rhythm and other similar biofeedback experiments are being conducted everywhere in the West (see ESOTERA 4/76, page 352).

Soviet Researcher as Fakir

While I was in the USSR late in 1976 I had an opportunity, within the framework of the Conference on Psychic Self-Regulation in Alma Ata, to discuss advances in this field with Dr A.S. Romen, who practices yoga along with his academic work. In 1965 Dr Romen went to India to study the mysterious phenomena of control of metabolism as they are practiced by fakirs and yogis. After his return he exhibited a film with the title "Who Are the Indian Yogis?" in which he demonstrated the following phenomena (the film was shown during the conference):

A human subject was placed between two chairs in such a way that only her head and feet were on the chairs. She was thus lying -- under the influence of suggestion (hypnosis) -- entirely straight in the air. In another experiment a man stuck a long metal needle through his upper arm, pulled it back out, and although skin and muscular tissue had been pierced, did not bleed. The next day the hole had completely disappeared.

I was astonished when I heard that the man in the film was Dr Romen himself. According to Dr Romen, these potentialities are not limited to yogis in India, and in fact he offered to teach me this method within 10 days! A woman participant in the conference assured me that after 10 days of Dr Romen's training she had been capable of healing a bleeding wound immediately. The basis of this training is the creation of a state of inner

peace and intensive psychic and physical relaxation. The course of autogenous training founded by Dr Schultz works in a similar way.

Self-Regulation and Sports

The effects are not only being studied in the laboratory, but also applied in practice by Soviet scientists. It has been observed that Olympic Games contestants can obviously profit by this method, learning to influence their metabolism in addition to the usual muscle training, which, of course, is also necessary. By suitable exercises it becomes possible to release additional energy reserves for peak performances. Among the international sport élite, where the differences between gold, silver, and bronze are often measured in mere fractions of seconds, such fine points of heightened performance play a part that should not be underestimated. In fact, Dr Romens's latest book appeared under the title "Psychic Self-Regulation and Sports."

In my lecture on the occasion of the Alma-Ata conference I pointed out the close relationship between feedback control of events inside the body (INS = inside the skin) and the supposed non-motor manifestations outside the body, which are designated in parapsychological literature as psychokinesis (OUTS = outside the skin). Certain subjects, such as Swami Rama, were obviously able to control processes inside and outside the body. In the presence of astonished scientists he succeeded in stopping his heart-beat up to a minute without negative effects on his health. According to Swami Rama, such *siddhis* or paranormal events are possible through intensive control over the internal physiological functions.

This idea was received sympathetically by the scientists at Alma-Ata, who conducted their yoga research with modern technical instruments such as the EKG [electrocardiograph], plasmograph, EEG [electroencephalograph] (recording of the electrical currents of the brain), and similar apparatus. They have confirmed the most important findings of western research in the field of internal organ and body control at the three conferences on psychic self-control (Alma-Ata, 1973, 1974, 1976). The Soviet scientists have worked out detailed data on clinically documented cases, including the treatment of alcoholism and acute organic diseases.

Dr Romen is co-founder of the "International Society for Psychic Self-Regulation," which will issue a new journal in the near future. The journal of the Biofeedback Research Society, newly issued in 1976 with the title "Biofeedback and Self-Regulation," will contribute to publicizing the latest research findings of this multistratified field. Although most of the meetings of the Biofeedback Research Society take place in the United States, in November 1977 the first international symposium on biofeedback will be held at the University of Tübingen.

Research on Hypnotism in Alma-Ata

Germany will probably soon be visited with the "alpha wave," for more and more little feedback devices (priced from 200 to 1,000 marks) are coming

on the market. Some enterprising people are offering courses in alpha training (often with dubious promises); they promise inner peace and the acquisition of control of consciousness and telepathy. This is an interesting field of research, but producing alpha waves is nothing special, since most people only have to lie down and shut their eyes. Recently the TM (transcendental meditation) movement has been criticized with the remark that the advantage for the meditator consists only in taking a nap.

Another important field of research that was discussed in Alma-Ata is hypnosis. After centuries of research the foundations of hypnosis are still obscure. From the days of Anton Mesmer to the present we have realized more and more clearly that hypnosis actually functions, that the trance state can be induced in the majority of the population, that suggestion has a powerful psychosomatic effect, and that even animals can be hypnotized. Mesmer's original theory of "animal magnetism" may have something in its favor, now that the secret of the biological influence of magnetic fields is beginning to be clarified, but one thing is clear -- hypnosis is a special form of self-regulation. That is to say, the person hypnotized controls his own functions himself, not the hypnotist! In the classical case, where a hypnotized person is stuck with a needle but feels no pain, it has been proved scientifically that the nerves of the skin forward the pain via the normal neural channels to the brain, but the brain simply refuses to react to these signals. That is self-control.

In the Soviet Union research is going on in the field of hypnosis as well; it is regarded as a part of psychic self-regulation, although of course it makes a hypnotist necessary to induce the trance.

The Medicine of the Future?

As has been pointed out in earlier numbers of this series, the Soviet scientists are very much interested in utilizing their new knowledge clinically. For that reason such researchers as, for example, B.A. Tokarev and Ye.A. Tarasov, as well as V.S. Slutskin, have found that the use of yoga exercises and autogenous training constitute parts of a complex treatment of osteochondritis (inflammation of the bones and cartilage) with accompanying neurotic symptoms. R.M. Yakhyayev has found that autogenous training, combined with work therapy, is an effective method of curing alcoholism. According to L.P. Yatskov, positive results can be obtained with autosuggestion in children with functional hyperkinesia (excessive movement, abnormal convulsive muscular activity). A.A. Koleshao, V.V. Savitskiy, and G.V. Sapchenko have used autogenous training in treating patients in the acute stage of cancer and also in cases of cardiac infarction. There are hundreds of pages of clinical reports on the use of psychic self-regulation in hospitals all over the USSR.

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PHOTO CAPTIONS

1. p 398 During the conference, author Scott Hill spoke on yoga experiments with Dr A.S. Romen, Soviet expert in the field of psychic self-regulation. Romen has practiced yoga for years and demonstrated various phenomena on film on his own body.
2. p 399 Electronic measurements like those made by author Scott Hill in his laboratory in Copenhagen with yogi A. Mayatiita are also being undertaken by Soviet researchers.